

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-11 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 SS-15
SP-02 PM-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00
DODE-00 PA-01 L-03 CA-01 /079 W
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FM USMISSION GENEVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0916

AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GENEVA 09131

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, AF

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE METHOD TO LIBERATE AFGHAN POLITICAL
PRISONERS

REF: A. STATE 151823 B. LONDON 9382 C. GENEVA 9015
D. KABUL 4803

1. AS RECOMMENDED REF A AND ANTICIPATED REF C, US AND
BRITISH (MACINNES) MISOFFS MADE JOINT APPROACH TO ICRC
JUNE 15 TO SEEK LATTERS ASSISTANCE TOWARD EFFECTING
LIBERATION OF AFGHAN POLITICAL PRISONERS. RECEIVING
MISOFFS WERE ICRC DELEGATE GENERAL FOR EUROPE AND NORTH
AMERICA, MELCHIOR BORSINGER, AFGHAN DESK OFFICER, FRED
ISLER, AND THE FORMER REGIONAL DELEGATE FOR THE AREA,
RESIDENT IN NEW DELHI, DOMINIQUE BOREL.

2. FOLLOWING PRESENTATION OF BRITISH - AMERICAN
VIEWS ON THE MATTER (MACINNES LEFT A "BOUT DE PAPIER")
AND REQUEST FOR ICRC ASSISTANCE AS DISCUSSED REFTELS, ICRC
RESPONDED THAT OUR APPROACH CAME AT AN OPPORTUNE MOMENT
SINCE THEY HAD JUST RECEIVED APPROVAL FROM THE AFGHAN
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GOVERNMENT FOR A VISIT BY BOREL IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THEY
COMMENTED THAT IT WAS SIGNIFICANT TO THEM THAT AFGHAN
APPROVAL OF THEIR REQUEST HAD BEEN GRANTED SO QUICKLY, IN
FACT ONLY 15 DAYS AFTER IT HAD BEEN SUBMITTED. ALTHOUGH
THERE WAS SOME MENTION OF ANOTHER VISIT INTERVENING BEFORE
HAND, THEREBY DELAYING BOREL'S KABUL TRIP, IT APPEARED
AFTER DISCUSSION THAT THEY HAD PLANNED FOR HIM TO

ARRIVE IN AFGHANISTAN ON OR ABOUT JUNE 25. AT SEVERAL POINTS IN THE SUBSEQUENT EXCHANGES, US AND BRITISH REPS EMPHASIZED NEED FOR SPEED IN THIS MATTER, BASED ON REPORTS WE HAD RECEIVED FROM KABUL AND, THEREFORE, URGED THAT BOREL'S VISIT TAKE PLACE AT AS EARLY A DATE AS PRACTICABLE.

3. ALTHOUGH HIGH ON BOREL VISIT, ICRC REPS DISPLAYED LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR TRIP TO KABUL OF PRESIDENT HAY OR OTHER HIGH ICRC OFFICIALS AT THIS TIME FOR THIS PURPOSE. NOR DID THEY FEEL THAT THE TIME WAS RIGHT AS YET FOR ICRC TO SEND A LETTER TO THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT ON BEHALF OF THE DETAINEES, WHILE RECOGNIZING THE POINT MADE BY THE US/UK REPS THAT SUCH A COMMUNICATION WOULD PROBABLY STRENGTHEN THE HAND OF THE MODERATES WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT, AND THEREBY ASSIST THE CAUSE OF THE DETAINEES. IN EXPRESSING THESE INITIAL REACTIONS, HOWEVER, THE ICRC REPS INDICATED THEY WOULD GIVE THE MATTER FURTHER THOUGHT AND DISCUSS IT WITH HIGHER OFFICIALS IN THE ORGANIZATION.

4. THE ICRC REPS MADE A GREAT DEAL OF THE POINT THAT THE ORGANIZATION WISHES TO AVOID PLACING ITSELF IN THE POSITION OF EVER ENCOURAGING THE DEPORTATION OF CITIZENS FROM THEIR OWN COUNTRY. ISLER, HOWEVER, ALLOWED THAT IN THE CASE OF OVERRIDING HUMANITARIAN CONDITIONS THEY MIGHT DO SO, CITING THE CASE OF CHILE AS A POSSIBLE
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PRECEDENT. (WE LEARN FROM THE UK MISSION THAT IN A LATER INFORMATIONAL CONVERSATION ON THIS SUBJECT WITH UNHCR PROTECTION CHIEF, GILBERT JAEGER, THE LATTER STATED THAT UNHCR AS A PRINCIPLE WAS "ABSOLUTELY AGAINST" ANY ENCOURAGEMENT FOR NATIONALS TO LEAVE THEIR OWN COUNTRY. JAEGER ALSO STATED THAT HE WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH THE ICRC ON THE MATTER OF ASSISTING AFGHAN DETAINEES.) ICRC REPS GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY FELT THERE WOULD BE LITTLE PROBLEM IN COORDINATING WITH UNHCR AND/OR ICEM FOR RESETTLEMENT OF THESE INDIVIDUALS ONCE THEY WERE OUT-SIDE AFGHANISTAN, AS THEY HAD DONE IN OTHER CASES IN THE PAST.

5. THE ICRC REPRESENTATIVES MENTIONED SEVERAL TIMES THE LACK OF SPECIFIC INFORMATION IN THEIR HANDS, SUCH AS NUMBERS, LOCATION AND TYPES OF DETAINEES, AS A BARRIER TO IMMEDIATE ACCESS. THEY DID INDICATE, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WERE IN POSSESSION OF SOME SUCH INFORMATION FROM RELATIVES AND INTERESTED FRIENDS. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES THEY FELT THEY SHOULD APPLY THEIR "CLASSIC APPROACH" TO THE SITUATION AND NOT DIRECT THEIR EFFORTS TOWARD ONLY "ONE PART OF THE PROBLEM", I.E., THE RELEASE OF DETAINEES.

BORSINGER EXPRESSED CONCERN AT ONE POINT THAT, WERE THE ICRC TO DO THIS, THE AFGHAN MIGHT CONCUR IN RELEASING THOSE PRISONERS IT SPECIFICALLY CHOSE, E.G. THE WIVES AND CHILDREN, IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THE IMAGE OF THE AFGHAN REGIME IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AFTER THE BLOODY EVENTS OF THE COUP, WHILE IGNORING OTHER PARTS OF THE BASIC HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM. AT ANOTHER POINT IN THE DISCUSSION THE ICRC EMPHASIZED THAT IN THEIR VIEW OBTAINING ACCESS TO THE PRISONERS WOULD BE THEIR MAIN GOAL, AT LEAST INITIALLY, COMMENTING THAT UNLIKE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, THE RED CROSS DID NOT, AS A GENERAL PRINCIPLE,

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AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 GENEVA 09131

APPROACH GOVERNMENTS DIRECTLY TO FREE PRISONERS.

6. COMMENT: IT IS THE VIEW OF BOTH THE BRITISH AND OURSELVES THAT THE ICRC WILL USE THE BOREL VISIT AS AN OPENING GAMBIT AND DETERMINE FROM ITS RESULTS HOW THEY WILL PROCEED IN TACKLING THE PROBLEM FURTHER. WE BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE SERIOUSLY SEIZED OF THE MATTER AND WILL PURSUE IT WITH CARE AND VIGOR. THEY HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO KEEP US ADVISED OF THEIR ACTIONS AND PROGRESS. HOWEVER, WE EMPHASIZED TO THEM OUR STRONG FEELING THAT THIS SHOULD BE PUT FORTH COMPLETELY AS A RED CROSS INITIATIVE AND NOT RELATED TO UK OR US INTEREST IN ANY WAY. END COMMENT.
VANDEN HEUVEL

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